


**ITALIAN PROTESTANTISM AT HOME AND ABROAD**

**AMEDEO MARIA DIEGO RIGGIO**





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ITALIAN PROTESTANTISM AT HOME AND ABROAD

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requirements for the degree of Master of Arts  
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*Grace L. de Osterhine*  
Adviser

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ACCEPTANCE SHEET

This thesis was read and approved  
by the undersigned:

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For the Committee  
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Grace L. de Casterline  
Prof. Grace L. de Casterline, Adviser

August 1948  
Date submitted



"WHATEVER OBSTACLES CONTROL,  
THINE HOUR WILL COME, - GO ON, TRUE SOUL!  
THOU'LT WIN THE PRICE, THOU'LT REACH THE GOAL."

- C. Mackay -



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### ITALIAN PROTESTANTISM AT HOME AND ABROAD

PREFACE .....	1
---------------	---

CHAPTER I .....	3
-----------------	---

#### THE CHILIASTIC TREND OF THE TENTH CENTURY

The Year 1000 A. D.  
Reaction  
Skepticism

CHAPTER II .....	7
------------------	---

#### THE CHURCH OF ROME IN THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

Prophecy of Joachim da Flora  
Growing Autocracy of the Church  
Pope Clement VII  
The Waldenses and Franciscan Traditions

CHAPTER III .....	21
-------------------	----

#### THE REVIVALISTS

Iacopo del Bussolaro  
San Bernadino da Massa  
Giovanni da Capistrano  
Giovanni da Vicenza  
Roberto da Lecce  
Savonarola

CHAPTER IV .....	25
------------------	----

#### THE AWAKENING





The Renaissance  
Humanism  
Petrarca

CHAPTER V .....	30
-----------------	----

ITALY'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE REFORMATION

CHAPTER VI .....	37
------------------	----

THE ITALIAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE GERMAN,  
FRENCH, ENGLISH AND SWISS REFORMATION

Martin Luther

CHAPTER VII .....	44
-------------------	----

MASSES YEARNING FOR FREEDOM

Italian Immigration in America  
Arrighi  
Nardi  
Gavazzi  
Calabrese  
The Methodist Missions  
Conclusion

BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	53
--------------------	----

<u>ALPHABETICAL INDEX OF ILLUSTRIOUS MEN AND WOMEN OF THE ITALIAN PROTESTANT REFORMATION DURING THE FOURTEENTH, FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURY.</u>	56
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## ITALIAN PROTESTANTISM AT HOME AND ABROAD

### PREFACE -

The religious revolution of the fourteenth century, that liberated Northern Europe from the despotism of the Papal Curia, had many illustrious Italians, who with undaunted faith prepared the way for the great luminaries of the Reformation.

Strange as it may seem, considering the abundant literature dealing with the Italian Reform movement, the general American public knows very little of the courageous effort of the so-called "Italian Heretics" who for the profound love of Evangelic truth sealed their living faith in blood.

The vigorous protest of such heroes of the Cross strenuously opposed the militancy of monasticism, and the unholy alliance of the Church with princes, kings and popes, protesting against the superstitious extravagances of the clergy, leading legions of new Christians to the pure experience of salvation through God in Christ.

The Italian Protestants at home and abroad claim seven hundred years of relentless struggle against all foes of religious and civil liberties.



It is the investigator's aim to review this glorious past and with awe and satisfaction point to the achievements of the Methodist Missions among the Italians in America, who proudly, today, can call many notable citizens their children in Christ.



## CHAPTER I

### THE CHILIASTIC TREND OF THE TENTH CENTURY

#### - THE YEAR 1000 - REACTION - SKEPTICISM

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The history of the Reformation is a subject of amazing magnitude linked with literature, religion, education, and political history.

While the central figure was Martin Luther, the way to that magnificent explosion of the sixteenth century was prepared by a large number of illustrious men of different countries who had attuned themselves with the reborn soul of man in search of truth and freedom. Italians had a great part in preparing the way. They were the great sufferers of the grinding spiritual despotism exercised by the Roman Clergy, who kept the human mind in bondage.

The year 1000 A. D. was an age of religious apathy, vices, abominations and utter religious serfdom.<sup>1</sup>

Let us for a moment imagine ourselves to be witnesses on that first eventful morning of the year 1000.

The dawn of the new day was breaking upon thousands and thousands of terrorized men, women, and children frantically imploring God's

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1

Giosue Carducci, Prose, - della Svolgimento della Letteratura Nazionale - discorso primo, p. 226





mercy, begging in agony and despair for baptism or holy communion, before the impending dawn would wipe all humanity from the face of the earth.<sup>1</sup>

The Clergy from the pulpits and street corners had announced that "satan was to be let free to destroy the world". The approaching judgment was already manifested in wild reports of monstrous battles fought in the air by giant dragons; terrific volcanic eruptions burning and swallowing entire cities; the birth of children with animal bodies.<sup>2</sup>

The sun, that eternal fountain of light and life, faithfully arose on that never to be forgotten day shedding its golden rays upon a tired, pallid, crying humanity.

Nothing happened.

The Clergy, without the least embarrassment announced, that the merciful God had heard the supplication of its Vicar on earth, and had granted forgiveness to the penitent children.

But if the Church was able to appease the fear of confused minds it was not capable of justifying the misinterpretation of the Scriptures.

The Supreme Authority on earth had failed in his exegesis of Mark 13: 8-10, where it is said that, "Before the beginning of the day of sorrow the Gospel must be first published among all nations". Also, in Revelation 20: 1-4, it is said, "He who had the key of the bottomless pit . . . . has bound satan for a thousand years and thus he must be

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<sup>1</sup> Carducci, op. cit., p. 267

<sup>2</sup> Carducci, op. cit., p. 267



loosed a little season". Accordingly, the Church said, "we have to wait another 1000 years before the Parusia will come". The postponing of the Chiliastic Theory, with all the eloquence used by the Clergy failed to convince the people.

From that day, a new, timid, occult life was manifested, life that in the subsequent years was to explode in the lightning and thundering of thought and work.

Here, begins the new intellectual era of the Italians.

In proportion that the religious fervor was declining, the intellectual revolt was increasing, forcing the coalition of throne and altar to suffocate the intrepid voice of a monk, Arnaldo da Brescia, who in 1154, in Campidoglio, Rome, had proclaimed the suppression of the Temporal power of the popes, and the inauguration of the Roman Republic. Arnaldo paid with his life for the audacity of his dreams.<sup>1</sup>

The struggle was on. Arnaldo left behind him a great number of disciples, who inherited the zeal and intrepidity of their master, and were ready on a favorable opportunity to take part in any design which had for its object the reformation of the Church.<sup>2</sup>

These pioneers laid open ancient knowledge and with stringent logic shattered the empire of superstition and credulity. The new taste for knowledge and elegant reading had a strong tendency to infidelity and heathenish atheism. The erudition, and refinement was

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<sup>1</sup> Cesare Cantu, Eretici d'Italia, Vol. I., p. 62

<sup>2</sup> Allix, Church of Piedmont, Mosheims Eccle. Hist. Cent. XII., Chap. V., Sect. 10, p. 169-174



without faith as "whited sepulchres . . . . beautiful on the outside  
but within full of bones".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>

Gospel of St. Matthew XXIII: 27



## CHAPTER II

### THE CHURCH OF ROME IN THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

#### PROPHECY OF JOACHIM DA FLORA - GROWING AUTOCRACY OF THE CHURCH - CLEMENT VII - THE WALDENSES AND FRANCISCANS TRADITIONS

The disappointment, caused by the failure of the second coming of the Lord, in a way was a blessing more than a curse. Together with many other factors it became "the prelude to that great drama of liberty of which the Renaissance was the first act".<sup>1</sup>

The expected "Dies Irae" had not dawned upon the world and the elements that it was supposed to destroy were still intact; doomsday had been postponed for another one thousand years. The human intellect, now hungry after knowledge, was set to thinking. The spark had become a burning, roaring fire . . .

A monk, Peter Abelard, 1079 - 1142, had opened a school in Paris, trying to rationalize the church teaching which had been formulated on the basis of scholasticism. He held that universals cannot be entities apart from things - they are in some way in things, God is in his crea-  
tures.<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, this reasoning lead to pantheism. Abelard, in his

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1

Sysmond, Renaissance in Italy, Vol. I., p. 6

2

S. Frost, Basic Teaching, p. 64





ethical views points out, that a wrong or right act lies not in the act itself but in the motivation of the actor. Consequently, if he believes in doing good, he may err, but does not sin. Good and morality, then are matters of conscience, controverting the Augustinian Theory by affirming that the "choice of an act is matter of the free will of man". Man can actually decide on the basis of his "knowledge and act in terms of his decision".<sup>1</sup>

In 1257, an English Franciscan monk, Roger Bacon, was interdicted and put into prison because, in his "Opus Majus" he proposed: (1) Science to be a subject must be understood and mathematically stated (2) Experimentations are all important in scientific investigations.

Bacon laid down the rule of wisdom in experimental science, teaching that there are only two ways to acquire knowledge, by experimentation and reason.

This monk, anticipating modern science, had pointed to the limitless potentials of human intellect, blasting the narrow quibblings of scholastics amusing themselves in finding out how many angels can dance on the point of a needle without jostling each other.<sup>2</sup>

A third man to be noted was a mystic Calabrian monk, Joachim da Flora, Abbot of the Flora Monastery near Cosenza, 1130 - 1202.

"Da Flora drank one drop from the cup of prophecy offered to his lips and cried that, "The gospel of the Father was past; the gospel of the Son was passing; the gospel of the Spirit was to be".<sup>3</sup> Joachim da

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<sup>1</sup> Frost, op. cit., p. 96 - 150.

<sup>2</sup> Symond, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Dante, Paradiso, Cant. XII., p. 139 - 141.



Flora was venerated as a prophet and even Dante said of him:

. . . . e luceni da lato  
Il Calabrese abate Giachino  
Di Spirito profetico dotato<sup>1</sup>

We cannot know the meaning of Joachim's utterances and what he meant by the "gospel of the Spirit, that was to be". Probably, he was keenly aware of the fact that superstition and the passive subjection of man's reason to earthly authority was passing, and that the emancipation of the human intellect was coming, bursting open the scholastic theories of his day, to regain the lost freedom. He surely and clearly envisioned the day when man, instead of a simple tool, would be a free agent, capable of judging for himself what was good or bad, right or wrong.

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1

Hoyt, New Encyclopedia of Practical Quotations, Isaac D'Isdraely quotes from Aquinas Summa and Sentences where the ideas' to be found, p. 745, No. 12.



## GROWING AUTOCRACY OF THE CHURCH

Before the year 1000, the Church had gained ground among the Teutonic and Slavic races through the tireless work of the catholic missionaries. One of the most active of these was Winifried, better known as St. Boniface, who exerted a great influence on the Western Church. Boniface perceived that a central authority would strengthen the ties between the Bishop of Rome and the Germanic races, and would establish a strong defence against the enemies of the Church, as well as against the remaining pagan tribes of the west. Boniface carried out his plans crowning at Soisson, Pepin as King, and obtaining recognition of the supremacy of the Pope, as head of the Frankish Church. The Boniface Theory was pleasing to the See of Rome to the extent that by the year 800 it claimed universal recognition on the following basis:

- (1) To preserve the unity of Christianity, Rome must be the focal point of Christendom as it was during the Roman Empire.
- (2) Rome contains the graves of the chief apostles of Christianity, Peter and Paul, the founders of the Christian Church.
- (3) The missionaries, through their labor, had created a profound reverence for the Bishop of Rome, who was represented as the "Vicegerent of Christ on earth".
- (4) The "Pseudo-Isodorian decretals" legalized the Pope's authority in his claims.



These "decretals" were a collection of ecclesiastical laws of the early popes collected by Isodore, Bishop of Seville, about the year 136. The main purpose was to prove, that all bishops derived their authority from the Bishop of Rome, who in turn had received his from Christ.

In the eight century, Peppin, "le bref", mayor of the palace to the King of France, had raised himself to the Merovingian Throne, with the Pope's consent.

Peppin, to repay the Pope's benevolent blessings forced the Lombards to give up some cities, that they had wrested from the Greek Emperor, and coming to Rome placed the keys of the conquered cities on St. Peter's altar, asking as his only reward, the remission of his sins. Peppin, the usurper, had in so doing, established the Temporal power of the popes. His son, Charlemagne, in the year 800, came to Rome and in exchange for a crown placed on his head by Leo III, kissed devoutly the stairs of St. Peter's Church and solemnly ratified his father's bequests.





## POPE CLEMENT VII

The successors of Charlemagne were weakling kings, and unable to resist the growing authority of the Roman See, which had become the tool of intriguers of some powerful Italian families. When Hildebrand, a monk of Cluny, son of a carpenter of Savoy, came to the Chair of St. Peter as Pope Gregory VII., he had high hopes of liberating the papal chair and the Church from all dependence on the Temporal powers.

During his pontificate, Gregory VII exercised undisputed power over all Temporal princes whom he considered as satellites of the pontifex the only true source of light. Gregory VII desiring to establish a visible Theocracy with the Pope as supreme ruler, started by changing the clergy into a virtual monastic order, compelling them to observe the Law of Celibacy and forming a militia with no other earthly obligation than that of obeying and carrying out the command of the Supreme Head of the Church. He next promulgated a law against "lay investiture of ecclesiastics". The kings had held that: "ecclesiastical holders of great feudal territories should be considered as vassals of the Temporal Lords", as all lands were property of the Crown. Accordingly, kings were accustomed to appoint church dignitaries and invest them with authority.<sup>1</sup>

Gregory VII, in 1075, ordered that the "clergy should not accept



an ecclesiastical office from a layman, and that no layman had any right to grant investiture to the clergy". He compelled all bishops to enforce his laws, sending throughout the Church a number of "legates" (like the Roman Proconsuls) to see that the laws were carried out.<sup>1</sup>

The investiture contest meant the complete surrender on the part of rulers of all lands possessed by the Church, and the submission of the civil authority to the See of Rome. The struggle between Gregory VII and the rulers went on until his death. At last the man who had humiliated Henry IV of Germany at Canossa, was compelled himself, to flee from the Eternal City, and to take refuge at Salerno, where he died, exclaiming, "I have loved righteousness and hated iniquities, therefore, do I die in exile".<sup>2</sup>

After the death of Gregory VII the Christian world was found to be divided in two unequal factions; on one side a separate caste of priests daring to use the power of the Church, and claiming to be invested with peculiar privileges; on the other, a servile flock reduced to blind and passive submission.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> D'Aubigne, op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> D'Aubigne, op. cit., p. 49

<sup>3</sup> D'Aubigne, op. cit., p. 50



## THE WALDENSES AND FRANCISCANS TRADITIONS

For a long time, the Church had felt the approach of a growing struggle between Hierarchism and evangelistic Christianity.

In the eleventh century, several sects arose with the spirit of revolt, creating great concern in the minds of civil and ecclesiastical rulers. One of these, the Albigensy, named after the City of Albi, France, known also as "Cathari" or Paterini", maintained that the Church should be a spiritual institution formed of the pure in heart.

The "Paterini" were making strong protests in Milan against the Simony and corrupted morals of the Roman Clergy.

Another sect, the Waldenses, so-called after Peter Waldo, a wealthy merchant of Lyon, France, was intent on popularizing the Scriptures, translated into the Provencal vernacular<sup>1</sup> by presenting them as the only authority in matters of faith.

To root them out, Innocent III ordered the extermination of the sect in their stronghold in Southern France. Those who survived fled into the valleys of Piedmont, from where soon their preaching extended throughout the Northern part of Italy and even to Rome, Calabria and

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1

This ancient Provencal vernacular was read by ~~Italians~~ and Spaniards.



Sicily. In the fourteenth century, nearly 4000 of them were killed or sold into slavery.<sup>1</sup>

But persecution was not enough to blast their fervent zeal, and their tenets even reached the receptive minds of those great geniuses, Wycliffe and John Huss. Today, the Waldenses in Italy, the oldest protestant church in the world, is a strong evangelical organization, with many churches and great religious influence.

The manner in which the Waldenses disseminated their Christian principles in Italy was, by carrying with them a box of trinkets and upon entering the houses of the people cautiously intimating that they had commodities for sale, and others more valuable than those on display. The poet, John Greenleaf Whittier, commemorated the missionary zeal of the Waldenses in the following poem:

"O lady fair, these silks of mine are  
    beautiful and rare,  
The richest web of Indian loom,  
    which beauty's queen might wear;  
And my pearls are pure as thy own fair  
    neck, with whose radiant light they vie;  
I have brought them with me a weary  
    way, Will my gentle lady buy?"

And the lady smiled on the worn old man  
    through the dark and clustering curls  
Which veiled her brow as she bent to  
    view his silks and glittering pearls;  
And she placed their price in the old  
    man's hand, and lightly turned away,  
But she paused at the wanderer's earnest  
    call, - "My gentle lady, stay!"

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<sup>1</sup>

Symond, Renaissance in Italy, Vol. II., p. 605





"O lady fair, I have yet a gem which a  
purer lustre flings,  
Than the diamond flash of the jewelled  
crown on the lofty brow of kings, -  
A wonderful pearl of exceeding price,  
whose virtue shall not decay,  
Whose light shall be a spell to thee  
and a blessing on thy way."

The lady glanced at the mirroring steel  
where her form of grace was seen,  
Where her eye shone clear, and her dark  
locks waved their clasping pearls between;  
"Bring forth thy pearl of exceeding  
worth, thou traveller gray and old, -  
And name thy price of thy precious gem,  
and my page shall count thy gold."

The cloud went off from the pilgrim's  
brow, as a small and meagre book,  
Unchased with gold or gems of cost, from  
his folding robe he took!  
"Here, my lady fair, is the pearl of price,  
May it prove as such to thee!  
May - keep thy gold - I ask it not, for  
the word of God is free!"<sup>1</sup>

In 1517, the same year that Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five  
thesis on the Church door of Wittenberg, the Archbishop of Turin re-  
ported the following charges against the Waldenses who were by then to  
be found in almost every city and village of Italy:

- (1) They receive the Scriptures as the only rule of faith.
- (2) They reject the doctrines approved by the popes.
- (3) They deny the intercessions of the holy saints.
- (4) They deny the efficiency of the masses for the dead.

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1

John Greenleaf Whittier, Poetical Works, p. 91.



- (5) They deny that the priest has power to forgive sins.
- (6) They reject the use of holy water.
- (7) They condemn indulgences.
- (8) They deny purgatory.
- (9) They refuse the worship of images.
- (10) They deny the supreme authority of the pope.
- (11) They believe that private prayers are acceptable to God.

Several armed expeditions were sent against the Waldenses to exterminate them; the first in 1530, followed by others in 1560, 1561, 1663, 1665 and 1686. The massacre of 1663, prompted Cromwell to make a strong protest and to consider invading Northern Italy. Milton, voicing the grief and prayers of his fellow believers, consecrated the Waldenses' martyrdom in the following poem:

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints whose bones  
Lie scattered on the Alpine Mountains cold;  
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,  
When all our fathers worshiped stocks and stones.

Forget not: in thy book record their groans  
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold  
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled  
Mothers with infants down the rocks.  
Their moans the vales redoubled to the hills, and  
They to heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow  
O'er all the Italian fields where still doth sway  
The triple tyrant: that from these may grow  
A hundredfold, who having learned thy way  
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.



## THE FRANCISCANS

Twelve years after Waldo had founded the society of the "Poor of Lyon", a child was born in the opulent household of a rich merchant of Assisi. They named him "Francis". In his youth he took part in a war and was taken prisoner. This experience made him very pious and led him to choose a monastic life.

His austerity and piety attracted a number of priests who followed him in his preaching tours. The increasing number of followers induced Francis to form a society with appropriate rules of conduct. The first rule was "poverty" as a holy duty; the second, "fasting and flogging" thrice weekly, and the third, care for the sick and poor. To express a sense of profound humility, they called themselves "Fratres Minores" - (Minor Brethren). The Franciscan influence became very great, fifty years after Francis's death, there were 8000 Franciscan Cloisters with 200,000 monks. But the rule of poverty was not maintained for very long. The order became rich, powerful and corruption crept into it. Yet the Franciscans rendered a great service as missionaries and teachers, copyists and scribes, and above all by their sincere efforts to help the poor.

"Francis was a Christian reformer who received his inspiration from the preaching of Peter Waldo".<sup>1</sup> He was an ardent lover of evan-

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1

Philip Shaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. V., p. 506.



gelical truth. Francis suffered because of the strong ecclesiastical formalism - and in fact, in 1210, he ordered in his rule: "The scrupulous observance of the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ".

Cardinal Ugolino, (later Pope Gregory IX), succeeded in using the Franciscan influence for the benefit of the Church, changing the rule of the order in 1221 and again Romanizing it in 1223, when "Brother Francis" had to promise obedience and reverence to his Holiness the Pope and his successors.

Harnack says, that later the followers of John Huss assimilated and elaborated the Franciscan elements, preparing for the great Baptist movement and the social revolution of the fourteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

The "Fratricelli Apostolici" under Segarelli's leadership, with their evangelical poverty, opposed Rome, preaching the gospel throughout Italy. Segarelli was arrested in 1330 and condemned to be burned with his books. In 1331, Pope John XXII condemned another follower of Segarelli, Giovanni Oliva, whose bones were disinterred and burned. The Franciscan influence must have been very great and wide in its extent.

Roger Bacon, (1215-1294), founder of experimental science was a Franciscan monk. Also, a Franciscan was Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, (1175-1253), a subtle interpreter of the Scriptures, a denouncer of the abuses of papal court.<sup>2</sup>

William of Occam, (1270-1349), the greatest English schoolman,

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<sup>1</sup> Adolph von Harnack, History of Dogma, Vol. II., p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> Encyclopedia Britanica, Vol. XI., 9th Edition.





(Doctor Invincibilis) headed at Perugia, Italy, the revolt of the Franciscan Order against Pope John XXII.<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther called Occam "my beloved teacher". Another Franciscan monk, famous for his commentary of the Bible and for his great influence on Luther and the subsequent course of the reformed doctrine, was Nicolaus de Lyra, 1340, of whom it was said, that:

"Si Lyra non Lyrasett      2  
Lutherus non Saltasset".

During the Lutheran revolt, many Franciscan Italians left the Cloister to become reformers. Among these was the most eloquent and learned preacher of the century, "Bernardo Ochino da Siena", (1487-1564), general of the newly-founded Order of Capuchins. In 1545, he became a minister of the Italian protestant congregation at Augsburg. Forced to flee from Augsburg in 1547, he went to England, where he was made prebendary of Canterbury with a pension granted to him by Edward VI. Ochino had great influence on Milton's "Paradise Lost", which bears a remarkable resemblance to Ochino's "Tragedy", a highly religious drama, written originally in Latin in 1550, and translated by Bishop Ponet.

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<sup>1</sup> Prof: T. M. Lindsay, Encyclopedia Britanica, Vol. XI., p. 717., 9th Edition.

<sup>2</sup> Encyclopedia Britanica, Vol. XV., p. 113., 9th Edition.



## CHAPTER III

### THE REVIVALISTS

IACOPO DEL BUSSOLARO - SAN BERNADINO DA MASSA  
- GIOVANNI DA CAPISTRANO - GIOVANNI DA VICENZA  
- ROBERTO DA LECCE - SAVONAROLA

During the Medieval Era in Italy, there was a phenomenal rise of religious revivals, due to the emotional and vivid imagination of the Italians, of the temporary effects produced by these preachers, there can be no question. The changes which they wrought in states and cities proved that the enthusiasm they aroused was more than merely hysteria.<sup>1</sup>

The revivalists generally were hostile to the Church and violently attacked the vices of the people and the corruption of the Clergy. Iacopo Bussolaro of Pavia, (1356), son of a box maker, member of the Augustinian Order, reputed to have lived a saintly life, when commissioned to preach, vehemently denounced usury, sanctioned by the Church, and the vices of princes and religious dignitaries. He lead a revolt against the abuses of the House of Beccaria and established a Republican form of government in Pavia. He was finally arrested and died in the dungeon of a convent at Vercelli.

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<sup>1</sup>

Symond, Renaissance in Italy, Vol. I., Chapter VIII, p. 247.



Another revivalist was, Bernadino da Massa, (1425), a Franciscan monk, who for forty-two years devoted his energy to the spiritual regeneration of his people. His powerful eloquence and austerity of life brought harmony and peace among the jealous members of the ruling Italian families. His texts were always taken from the Scriptures and his evangelical expositions impressed the people profoundly.

He was followed by Giovanni da Capistrano, (1415), a member of the Franciscan Order of Observants, who had a great reputation for his saintly life. The "Chronicle of Muratori", reports that as many as 10,000 people at a time came to hear him preach the gospel at Siena.<sup>1</sup>

Robert da Lecce, a Franciscan monk of great fame, (1448) drew immense numbers of people to his preaching. He was very emotional and theatrical. From the pulpit of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva in Rome, he attacked vehemently the bloody fights between the Orsini and Colonna, families closely connected with the Vatican, calling them to repentance and peace. From the work of these revivalists there emerges the fact that the appearance of Savonarola at Florence was not an isolated religious phenomena but an evidence of a profound desire for honest, dynamic and spiritual leadership. The inherent defects of all Italian revivals, spasmodic and vehement, while they lasted, are exhibited upon a tragic scale in Savonarona.<sup>2</sup>

Girolamo Savonarola was born in Ferrarz, in the year 1452. In his youth he felt a decisive impulse to consecrate his life to the revival

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<sup>1</sup> Ludovico A. Muratori, History of Italy, Chapter XXX., p. 865.

<sup>2</sup> Symond, Renaissance in Italy, Vol. I., p. 315.



of the moral and christian life of the people of Florence. He entered the Dominican Order and soon led a revolt against the vices and corruptions of the civil and ecclesiastical rulers of Florence and Rome. It appears that he held an unorthodox view concerning the doctrines of justification by faith, the validity of indulgences and Church traditions.

However, his main objective was to influence and change the manner of living and not the faith of his people. He fought tenaciously the discipline of the Church because he perceived the corruption and unfaithfulness of the Clergy. He is called the "Luther of Italy" but while they have many things in common, there are fundamental differences between the two; both preached, paying no attention to the injunctions of the See of Rome. Both refused to obey the summons of Popes Alexander VI and Leo X. Both appealed directly to the people and the General Council of the Church for fair decisions. Both accused the Church of Simony. Both proclaimed the Christian duty to resist the errors of the Roman See. Both believed in the "salvation by faith", and both with thunderous voices, stern and sublime courage, denounced vices and corruption.

Savonarola, however, never attacked the apostolic rights of the Bishop of Rome, and never discussed the authority of the Church and the popes. He was a moral reformer. The Monk of San Marco, saw moral wrongs and demanded the moral reform of the Head of the Church.

Luther, on the other hand, laid the ax at the root of the evil,





the false theology, source of doctrinal errors. His gigantic logic and inexhaustible energy was directed in uprooting them and reconstructing the tottering temple of Christianity on the granite foundation of the Bible, the final authority in matters of faith. Martin Luther put the Scripture in the hands of all the people, in the vernacular, so that all the people could read and understand, instituting the rights of private interpretation and private judgement of the sacred texts.

If, Savonarola, had moved with his eloquence the emotional tendency of the Italians, Luther on the other hand had created emotional and intellectual evaluations, stimulating investigation and search for truth. Savonarola was imprisoned and tortured by the "holy tribunal of the Inquisition". They could not find any fault with his doctrines, but as they said, "dead enemy fights no more". Reasoning thus, they condemned him to execution - not a burning funeral pyre, but a scaffold. The martyr died for the cause of Christ, for having had the temerity to denounce the vices and corruption of a debased civil and ecclesiastical government.

Savonarola benefited Luther with his life and martyrdom, proving that Rome cannot be reformed from within; benefited Calvin, by giving him the pattern for his theocratic form of Genevan government; and benefited the world by inspiring a feeling that "a new light had<sup>1</sup> awakened the human race".

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<sup>1</sup>  
Villari, Vita di Savonarola, Vol. II.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE AWAKENING

#### THE RENAISSANCE - HUMANISM - DANTE - PETRARCA

Envisioning the new era, "da Flora" had prophesied that the "gospel of the Spirit was to be", and it came. That insurmountable bulwark, the union of the throne and altar, which stood over against intellectual sovereignty, was disintegrating. The traditional serfdom was being supplanted by the rising power of craft and merchant guilds. Town life, national states, native languages, schoolmen, explorations, discoveries and inventions were laying the foundation for a new outlook on life. The Italian "heretic Patarini", stirring the religious emotions of the country peoples, had made them conscious of a "higher law written upon their hearts, by the Holy Spirit, that will accept nothing unless it is thought by God".<sup>1</sup>

The wonderful awakening with its many sides, known in history as humanism, the culture of the renaissance, was gripping tenaciously the Italian mind, determining a new spiritual trend full of profound ethical implications.

The "Homo Romanus" with its racial prejudices, following Seneca's

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<sup>1</sup>

G. Volpe, Movimenti Religiosi, Firenze, Vallacchi, p. 15.



formula "Homo res sacra Homini" (Man sacred to Men), was changed into "Homo humanus" - this "human", conscious of his rational self, asserted his sovereignty, emphasized the civic, spiritual and ethical content of liberalism, in order to know himself, improve himself, interpret virtue, and realize the universal brotherhood of man. It was natural that, refusing to formulate dogmas and professions of faith, the humanists would reject all dogmatic and scholastic teaching.

Each person was free to acquire knowledge and develop his own opinion. Tolerance was for them a misleading term, because it had the characteristics of indulgence, or condescension to endure for a time what could not be fully approved. Tolerance cannot assure permanent freedom and respect for conscientious searchers of truth, consequently, religious freedom had to be considered as political right, and religious and civil authority each must have a separate sphere of action.

Morality also came under the scrutiny of the humanist. Their code was based on the intelligent understanding of right and wrong following the teaching of St. John: "God dwells in us and we in God".

Another of their endeavors was the idea of universal brotherhood of man, not a mechanical leveling of the human race but the equal opportunity for the pursuit of happiness, abolishing vicious privileges, imperialistic despotism, subjugation of minorities and usurpation of the human rights.

The great genius who first shook the slumber of the Middle Ages



was Dante Alighieri, born in Florence 1265. His age was one of the troubadors, Italian and French itinerant poets, who went from court to court and from village to village singing their poems. Some were famous lyric poets: as Folchetto, Sordello di Mantova, Ugo Grimaldo, Pietro Vidal, etc., who had joined the Waldenses, directing their satirical compositions against the abuses of the Clergy, singing their songs in vernacular. The following is a translation of one of their popular lyrics:

If God saves those whose  
sole merit lies in loving  
Good cheer and paying their  
court to women - if black monks -  
White monks and templars gain  
heaven, then St. Peter and  
St. Andrew were great fools to  
submit to such torments for the  
sake of Paradise which cost others  
so little.<sup>1</sup>

Dante, the creator of the Italian language, was a man of sorrow and transcendent love of superhuman earnestness. He had a great part in the contests between the Pope, the Emperor and the forces for the liberty of the Italian people. Exiled from his native city he wandered from court to court, acquiring wisdom and moral strength.

In his monumental work, "La Divina Commedia", he revealed his soul, his joys, his fears, and his vision; carving in perfect patterns the mind and heart of his age; condemning to eternal infamy all those culprits who betrayed the moral and civic aspirations of his countrymen.

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R. de Catelnau, Poesies des Troubadours, Vol. N. P. p. 383.





Dante's name has been condemned by the Church because he dared to assert that the power of the Emperor came from God and not from the See of Rome. Also, because he condemned the spurious decretals of Isodoro and denounced the Temporal power of the Pope as the cause of the Church's moral and spiritual decadence. In his Inferno, he says:

Ahi! Costantino, di quanto mal fu matre,  
Non la tua conversione, ma quello<sup>1</sup>  
Che da te prese il primo ricco patre.

Dante's powerful mind penetrating the mysteries of human behavior, giving us a vivid picture of both the inner and the outward life and habit of the people of his time, prepared the way for a new, a better civilization.

Francesco Petrarca, (1304 - 1374), was a young man of 17 when Dante died. His fervent spirit led him to study the classics of that prince of the Latin poets: Publius Maro Virgilius, (born in Mantova, 70 - 19 B. C.) one who had ruled continuously in classic halls.<sup>2</sup>

Petrarca was a great humanist, who worshipped the monumental works of Tullio Marco Cicerone, (106 - 143 B. C.). Petrarca loved life, Roman history, and his Italy, which was then ruled by the barbaric, detested Roman Curia. He called Clement VI "Leviathan, prince of

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<sup>1</sup> Dante, Inferno, XIX, p. 115 - 117.

<sup>2</sup> S. J. Coleman, President Georgetown University, National Georgia Magazine, p. 439.



darkness . . . school of error - temple of heresy". The following may be given as a specimen:

The fire of wrathful heaven alight,  
and all thy harlot tresses smite,  
Base city, thou from humble fare,  
Thy acorns and thy water, rose,  
To greatness, rich with other's woes,  
Rejoicing in the ruin thou did'st bear.

Foul nest of treason! Is there aught  
Wherewith the spacious world is fraught<sup>1</sup>  
Of bad or vile . . . . .

In Laura, for Petrarca was more than an earthly personality, he idealized the abstract theory of refined modesty and superhuman virtues.

Adoring in her the reality of life, family, fatherland, and the beauty of nature. His genius "reached forth across the gulf of darkness, recapturing the traditions of a splendid past"<sup>2</sup> to guide the new Italy into the way of an ascending human freedom.

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<sup>1</sup> Petrarca, Opera, Tom. III., p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> Symond, Renaissance of Italy, Vol. I., p. 8.



## CHAPTER V

### ITALY'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE REFORMATION

Martin Luther, returning to Germany from Italy, reported that, "Italy is plunged into darkness so thick that it may be felt. No one, in that country knows anything of Christ and yet they are our masters<sup>1</sup> in faith and morals".

Another contemporary of Luther, Nicolo Macchiavelli, said, "Italians are indebted principally to the Church and the priests for having become impious and immoral".<sup>2</sup>

Erasmus showed the ignorance and fear of the people saying, "A dying man was asked, "What do you believe?" The poor man, fearful lest he be caught in some heresy, if he should make an erroneous confession of faith replied, "What the Church believes." Asked again, And what does the Church believe? "What I believe." Questioned once more, "What do you believe?" The dying man answered, "What the Church believes."

The Italians for centuries had been a silent audience to a sordid, ruinous, disastrous drama, enacted day after day, by nobleman and clergy. There were bitter discords between Dominicans (known in Italy as "Domine-Canis" God's hounds) and Franciscans - over the doctrine of

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<sup>1</sup>

D'Aubigne, History of the Reformation, Vol. I., p. 378.

<sup>2</sup>

Loc. cit. p. 197.



the Immaculate Conception. Piazza San Domenico in Palermo, Sicily, was a bloody battle ground, where the two orders would pugnaciously settle their theological disputes.

Against the Scotists, Thomists, ferociously contended the affects of the Sacraments upon the souls of Christian believers. Jesuits, using the mean and debasing expedients against the Jansenists, caused the writing of the famous "Provincial Letters of Blaise Pascal in 1656", which letters were printed in every language and circulated throughout all of Europe. These letters created a tremendous reaction against the Jesuit Order of whom Pascal said, "It is your deliberate intention to tell lies, and that it is both knowingly and purposely that you load your opponents with crimes of which you know them to be innocent, because you believe that you may do so without falling from a state of grace".<sup>1</sup>

Twenty-five times, two or three popes contended with each other for the Chair of Peter, inciting rebellions, causing schisms, warfare between partisans, and calling foreign armies to invade Italy forty-two times, to support their claims. One pope very often contradicted another pope.

Gregory I wrote to Emperor Mauricious, "I confidently say, that whosoever calls himself or desires to be called Universal Priest, he is the precursor of the antichrist".<sup>2</sup> But Gregory III, decreed that,

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<sup>1</sup> Blaise Pascal, Provincial Letters, Modern Letters, Letters XV., p. 533.

<sup>2</sup> Post - Nicine, Fathers, Vol. XII., Book VII., Letter XXXIII., Scribner Edition, New York, p. 226.





only the Bishop of Rome is the Universal Bishop.

In "De Pontifice" Cardinal Bellarmino teaches "that if the pope should ever err, commending vices and prohibiting virtues, the Church is obliged to believe it".<sup>1</sup>

The corruption of Benedict IX, John XXII., John XXIII., and Alexander VI and the notorious Marozia, Theodora, Rosa Vannozza, and Lucrezia Borgia, affected so strongly the religious life of the Italians, that they adopted the advise of Guerazzi to "hold up your garments and let us pass on tiptoe over this mountain of mud and blood".

Five hundred years of "Santo Ufficio" exhibited the cruelty of the Church by torturing, strangling and burning in public squares of the Italian cities, thousands of saintly men and women. Even the tomb's peaceful rest was disturbed, bones were disinterred, reduced to ashes and scattered to the winds. Villages from the high peaks of Piedmont to the rugged plains of Calabria and golden valleys of Sicily were razed to the ground, people massacred, the few alive and destitute fled to Switzerland, Germany, England, Bohemia or wherever a merciful refuge was offered to them.

The suppression of truth and humiliating retractions, even in our times, has been demanded by the Church, from men like Fogazzaro, Monsignor Bonomelli, Father Curci, and others. Still, in spite of all these sacriligious violations of human liberties, men guided by

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<sup>1</sup>  
Bellarmino, De Pontifice, Chapter VII.



the unerring spirit of God, tenaciously held to the eternal simplicity of the Christian life, sure that the "gates of hell shall not prevail".<sup>1</sup>

The historical development of the human and religious experiences cannot be stopped or suppressed. Man's mind, exposed to the historical experiences of its environment, caught "the concept of freedom, singing out in the argumenting chorus of demands for "our rights . . . free to build, free to own land, free to worship, free to meet with their fellowmen, free to exchange ideas, free, free . . .".<sup>2</sup>

It was this spirit that, in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Italy gave birth to the Renaissance.

The Italian religious Reformation had three particular stages:

(1) The "formation" from Paul's residence in Rome to the Nicean Council (325 A. D.) (2) The "deformation" from 325 to the year 1000 A. D. (3) The reformation from the year 1000 to ? ? ? ? ? . . . . . when will it be? The formative period was one of "ingestion". Great thinkers aware of the development of new social forces had set themselves to the herculean task of shaping and reshaping ideas and ideals into enduring philosophical, ethical and political doctrines.

The "battle of the ages" was being reinterpreted in the light of the new Christian concept of life, asserting the right of man to self-determination, and the inalienability of human aspirations to life,

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<sup>1</sup> Gospel of St. Matthew: XVI., 18.

<sup>2</sup> Harold Rugg, Democracy and the Curriculum, p. 43.



liberty and pursue of happiness .

The second period should have been the occasion for "ingestion" and assimilation of the rich intellectual nourishment of the preceding centuries but, reactionary elements, greedy for power, created a historical crisis with the hybrid alliance of a pagan Emperor, Constantine, and the humble Bishop of Rome.

Constantine, in alliance with Rome, called a Church Council at Nice, (325) that consolidated the power and jurisdiction of the Roman See; formulated the so-called "Apostolic Creed" and made the Bishop of Rome, "Pontifex Maximus", the supreme ecclesiastic authority in Christendom.

Pagan rites, pagan hero worship, mass, purgatory, gods and demi-gods, choreographic pageantry with Oriental splendor, state religion, Biblical interpolations, falsifications of important Church historical documents, with wholesale conversions by coercion, brought power and corruption into the Church, so that the Christians of the Catacombs became an obscure minority, persecuted not for what they said, but for what they dared to think.

Church Councils, theologians, learned bishops, and laymen admitted the necessity of a reformation, so that groups from within the Church as: Monastic Orders, The Carthusians, The Carmelites, The Carmalculims of Arezzo, and Franciscans, together with those from the outside, as the Albigenses, the Paterinis, and the Waldensians,



prayed and worked to save the Church from extinction.

Arnaldo da Brescia, (1105 - 1155), the defender of Abelard of Paris, was planting the evangelical seed in Zurich, preparing the way for Zwingli. Coming to Rome, he forced Pope Adrian IV to flee, and establish the "Roman Republic" - arrested on June 18, 1155, he was hanged, burned and the ashes scattered on the swift waters of the Tiber.

In the place where Arnald's scaffold was erected in 1155, today a magnificent Methodist building stands, dedicated to the Glory of God and freedom of mankind.

Two centuries before Erasmus of Rotterdam Eulogized Padova as the "Athens of Europe", there was born a Marsilius of Padova, author of Defensor Pacis, written in 1324. In the chapters nine and ten, Marsilius discusses the constitution and relation of state and church, maintaining that the divine or religious law can have no other judge than Jesus Christ, denying any power of material coercion that could possibly belong to the ecclesiastical authority.<sup>1</sup>

This blasted the catholic point of view, not even abandoned today, that the punishment and burning of heretics has a dogmatic foundation. This position of the Church has been affirmed by Pius IX in his syllabus, 1864, where all various manifestations of religious

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<sup>1</sup> Ruffin, Religious Liberty, Putnam, New York, P. 43.





liberty are condemned. Marsilius' Defensor was the prediction of the modern state, and had great influence on William of Occam's and John Locke's theories. Their theories bear such great resemblance to Marsilius Defensor that we can assume them to be a development of it.<sup>1</sup>

The "Pontifex ~~Maximus~~" of the Renaissance, was Lorenzo Valla, (1405 - 1457), whose true critical perception and potent reasoning uprooted the old Vatican traditions. The famous document known as the Donation of Constantine, had been one of the strong pillars of the Temporal power of the popes, together with the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals, a collection of apocryphal apostolic canons. These, Lorenzo Valla proved to be deliberate forgery, ungenuine, invalid and fraudulent in their claims. It is no wonder that Cardinal Bellarmine, (1542 - 1621), uttered the prophetic words that Valla was the "precursor of the Reformation".

A young man, ready to dispute in twenty languages, sent a challenge to the Vatican's theologians to defend the thesis on "Latria". He was ready to prove that the "Hoc est corpus meum" used at consecration, was a magic blasphemous absurdity, contrary to reason and experience. Nobody cared to meet the young Count Pico della Mirandola, (1463 - 1494), who was invested with the spirit of Plato, Augustine and Chrisostom. Reuchlin and Erasmus, pupils of Pico, became very close friends of their master, and Luther, when he translated the Bible into German, profited by the works of those three unsurpassable scholars of the fifteenth century. The Italian Renaissance actually was beneficial to the Reformation, because it gave impulse to religious criticism and the study of the Bible.

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<sup>1</sup>

Novel Valois, Encyclopedia Britanica, Vol. XVII., p. 175.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE ITALIAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE GERMAN, FRENCH, ENGLISH AND SWISS REFORMATION

#### MARTIN LUTHER

"Lord, I pray thee that my son may remember thy name and propagate the truth" thus prayed John Martin, kneeling at the bedside of his little son, Martin, the future "Hammer of God".

Martin Luther, born in 1483 of poor but austere pious people, in his youth had to beg for his daily bread. At Magdeburg, the pinch of hunger compelled Martin to go singing from door to door to obtain food. One day, while in melancholic reflection, a door opened and a lovely woman appeared before Martin. She was Ursola Cotta, wife of Corrado Cotta, who invited Martin to come in and have something to eat. Corrado and Ursola Cotta found much pleasure in the boy Martin, and took him to live with them. Thus, Martin's studies were secured.<sup>1</sup>

The Cottas originally came from a noble family of Genoa (the City of Columbus, Andrea Doria and Giuseppe Mazzini). Probably, the Cottas came to Germany, forced to emigrate, because of religious intolerance. Their descendants became leading protestants, very influential in political

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<sup>1</sup>

D'Aubigne, History of the Reformation, Vol. I., p. 151.



and literary history of Germany, and very closely associated with men like Schiller, Goethe, Hubber and many other intellectuals.

Luther must have received a tremendously beneficial influence in the Cotta household, because he often referred to Ursola Cotta, saying, "There is nothing sweeter on earth than the heart of a woman in which piety dwells".<sup>1</sup>

Luther was a diligent reader of Valla's works, and from them he was convinced of the fraudulency of the Roman Curia. While in Rome, as at Padova, Bologna, Firenze, Siena, and Milano, he had the opportunity to meet several learned men, and "he took advantage of it to penetrate deeper into the meaning of the holy Scripture. . . . it was in Rome that he partially acquired the knowledge of Divine words under the attacks of which Rome was destined to fall".<sup>2</sup>

Even Calvin, in his youth, was profoundly impressed by an Italian thinker, "Pietro Alciati of Milano" (1492 - 1550). When he was in Ferrara under the pseudonym of "Carlo d'Esperville" and guest of the Duchess Renata of Ferrara, daughter of Louis XIII of France, he came in contact with leading protestants. Returning to Geneva, he commented that the "Italian mind is too critical and analytic, and much inclined to irrational thinking".

Zwingli also had contact with Pico della Mirandola, who initiated him in the study of the New Testament. When he was a pastor at Glarus, he openly confessed his debt to Pico's ideas, which gave to

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<sup>1</sup> D'Aubigne, op. cit., p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> D'Aubigne, op. cit., p. 197.



protestantism the symbolic character of the Eucharistic doctrine. Pico was to Zwingli what the Italian scholar Giovanni Florio (1591) was to Shakespeare, a teacher and friend.

German humanism has had as standard bearer, Rudolph Agricola, who was closely associated with Ermolao Barbaro, known as Barbarinus, 1447. Agricola studied under Teodoro Goza for eight years, and was welcome at the house of Este. There he learned to oppose scholasticism and anticipated the coming intellectual and religious revival.

Erasmus said of Agricola, that he was the first to bring from Italy the pure breath of high culture. Men from every country in Europe came to the Italian University of Salerno, distinguished for scholarship in Oriental languages. At the time when the Jews were persecuted by the kings and popes, Salerno was host to the Saracen's teachers, who translated from the Arabic and Hebrew into Latin several gems of Saracen Literature.

Bologna, (1151) was regarded as the best civil and canon law school of Europe.

Barbarossa, asserting the imperial claims into Italy had opened the way to all foreign students who came from various parts of Europe, forming French, English, German, Norman, Spanish and Catalonian University guilds, developing schools of medicine, philosophy, civil and canon law, Oriental and classic languages.

In the year 1360, Pope Innocent VI granted the universities the





power to teach theology and confer degrees, breaking the Dominican educational monopoly. Reggio, Modena, Vicenza, and Napoli, were independent universities producing a revolutionary culture, freeing philosophy and theology from the fetters of scholasticism and attracting intellectuals like, Alberti, Da Vinci, Toscanelli, Da Porta, Galileo, who penetrated the portals of scientific experimentations with Ficino (1433 - 1499), Telesio (1509 - 1588), Giordano Bruno (1548 - 1600), Campanella (1568 - 1639), Chrysolarus (1413), Guarini (1537), Filelfo (1398 - 1481), and Poliziano (1454 - 1494), who were mystic empirics busy expounding to eager students of every nation the knowledge of antiquities, history, metaphysics, law, science, political institutions, art, war, mythology, oratory, agriculture, astronomy, religion, traditional rites, and philology. Into this world of purifying criticism and unbending truth, Erasmus, Crotus Robearrus (1480 - 1540), Linacre of Basilea, a disciple of Poliziano; Ecolampadius, Melanacthon, Hulrich von Hutten (1511), who became doctor of law in Pavia; Corrado Rufu (1471 - 1526), who learned Neoplatonism from Pico; Flaccio (1520 - 1575), a friend of Luther and first writer of a protestant history of the Reformation; Stancary (1501 - 1599), who published the Hebrew grammar and antitrinitarian dissertations; Zanchi, Paolo Vergerio and Tremelio, who published a German version of the Bible, known as the Newstadd version, and Thomas More, whose "Utopias" presents Pico's idea. Marsilius da Padova, whose "Defensor Pacis" was published in England in 1536 by Thomas Cromwell, had a great influence upon Wycliff,



the Morning Star of the Reformation, and Crammer, the celebrated primate of England.

Green, in the Short History of the English People, points out that,

"Numbers of English learned men came to acquire the key of the new knowledge from the Florentine masters."

Grosseteste (1175 - 1253); Chauncer 1340 - 1400); Selling and Linacre, teacher of Erasmus; returning from Italy formed in Oxford that brilliant academy among whose members were John Colet, W. Crockyn, W. Latimer, John Craig and Knox.

Bernardino Ochino (1487 - 1565), translated his commentaries into English, and Lady Bacon, mother of Francis Bacon Verulam, translated Occhino's sermons on predestinations (1550). Pietro Martine Vermigli, an enthusiast of Savonarola's ideas, went to Padova and Bologna to study, there he read Bucer's commentaries and Zwingli's works, becoming an ardent reformer. He was invited by Erasmus by order of Edward VII to come to England (1547) to cooperate with Crammer and Latimer in the compilation of the book of common prayer and the reorganization of the Church discipline and liturgy.

In France, Stephen Dolet (1509 - 1546), and Marot came to the house of Este in Ferrara and transplanted the humanistic views learned there in the famous group of "Meaux" under the leadership of Bishop Bricconet (1472 - 1534), the precursor of the Huguenots. Marguerite of Valois, Queen of Navarre, (1492 - 1549), strongly supported the "Meaux group" and was an ardent admirer of the works of Marsilius and Ficino.



Lefevre (1492), coming to Florence to deepen his profound intellect by the study of Aristotle under Cardinal Bessarione, came in contact with Aldo Mauzio and Emilio of Verona, two outstanding exponents of the Renaissance. Returning to Paris, he published his famous Bible commentaries, anticipating Luther's doctrine on the "Justification by Faith" and the "Lord's Supper" interpretation by five years. Another great contribution to France was the Bible translation known as the "Olivetano" version, a gift from the Waldenses of Piedmont to Christian France. Many Italians had found asylum in Switzerland during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the Grisons, where there were several Italian protestant churches, well organized and militant. We find there, the Orelli, Pestalozzi, Minutolo, Burlamacchi, Varro, Rossetti, Biandrada, Vergerio, Curione, Stoppani, Vermigili, Ochino, Martine, Sozzini. Giovanni Diodati (1571 - 1649), professor of theology, at Geneva, and friend of John Milton, gave the Italians the finest translation of the Bible in the Italian language.

Giovanni Diodati was a close friend of Calvin, who delegated him to the Synod of Dort, where he collaborated in making the Belgian confession of faith. What was branded as paganism in the humanistic movement of Italy is purely a negative attitude against the illogical system of religious Olympus maintained by the Church.

Faust Socino, formulated the antitrinitarian doctrine and like Socrates by "asking questions" induced thinkers to think more. He had a tremendous influence in Italy and Poland. But reaction stopped his



course. Socino's triumph lies in the world's eager demand for religious liberty and freedom and self-determination that still pervades the Italian intelligentsia soon to explode in a complete obliteration of all traditional intellectual restraints.

Some people assert that the Italian Reformation was a failure in Italy, but the investigator can hardly agree to this. It was not a failure, but foreign armies, Santo Ufficio, political intrigues of other nations and Jesuit influence smothered it. The volcanic fire still burns in the minds and hearts of the best element of Italy's intellectuals.





## CHAPTER VII

### "MASSES YEARNING FOR FREEDOM"

#### ITALIAN IMMIGRATION IN AMERICA - ARRIGHI - NARDI - GAVAZZI - CALABRESE - THE MISSION OF METHODISM

The early leadership for the protestant missions to the Italians in America came from converts, representing a response to the social and spiritual needs of the community. Probably, the first pioneers of the new evangelical movement were Antonio Arrighi and Michele Nardi.

Arrighi was born in Florence, Italy, in 1835, and Nardi was born in Savignano, Italy, in 1850. Arrighi became a minister of an Italian protestant church in the lower east side of New York City. Nardi, who had not been ordained, went from city to city, as an itinerant Evangelist, laying the foundations of many missions through the United States.

Antonio Arrighi was converted through the instrumentality of Cyrus E. Carpenter, a harness maker and a member of the Methodist Church in Fairfield, Iowa. Arrighi wrote of him, "Carpenter was a man full of Christian zeal, and hospitality, exemplifying the spirit of his Master and Saviour".

At the time of Arrighi's conversion, Italy was closed to the Bible



truth, and the preaching of the gospel was prohibited by law. In Florence, the City of Savonarola, people had been jailed for possessing a Bible or a New Testament.

In 1881, Arrighi began his work in the Chapel of the "Five Point House of Industry" from which came the Broome Street Tabernacle, destined to be an important Presbyterian missionary center, through which numerous converts were reached among the many Italians in towns and cities of America.

Nardi, an Italian of culture, was with Garibaldi's Volunteers at the battle of Mentana, fighting against the papal army supported by troops of Napoleon III of France, in the year of 1867.

Studying the Bible, Nardi's attention was drawn to the words "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on His name". Deeply touched, he felt the urge to follow Christ. Reading in a Methodist paper of meetings being conducted at the home of Sarah Palmer in New York, Nardi decided to attend these meetings. Fully convinced of his new aims in life, he asked Rev. Mr. A. Simpson to dedicate him to the service of the Lord and his Italian countrymen.

In 1869, the "Five Point Mission" inaugurated a missionary program with the definite objective of bringing the living gospel to men, women and children of Italy in America.

In 1853, Father Gavazzi, a great Italian patriot and eloquent orator, came to America. He was the founder of the Chiesa Libera Italiana (The Free Church of Italy) an evangelical movement that had spread



extensively throughout the Italian peninsula. In America, he aroused great religious enthusiasm, lecturing to Italians in New York, Philadelphia and New Jersey.

At that time Italy was struggling for her independence which was finally achieved in 1870, when Pius IX surrendered and Rome was proclaimed the capitol of new Italy. Gavazzi's preaching naturally had a strong patriotic appeal, but its influence was felt in 1872, when services for the Italians were conducted in the Grace Episcopal Church, and in 1886 the "San Salvatore" Episcopal Church building was dedicated in Broome Street, New York City, to the "Service of the Lord" and the "Italians of the Community".

Antonio Dossari, a convert of Rev. Mr. Arrighi, was assigned as a Baptist preacher to the Italians in 1889 and Rev. Mr. Vito Calabrese, ordained by the Methodist Church was appointed to the upper East side of New York City, where Methodism now had one of the largest and most influential church organizations among the Italians in America.

Many of the missions and churches of today trace their beginning to the nucleus of protestant Italian immigrants, who were members of the Waldensian Church or the Free Church of Italy. At the end of the year 1900, the Italian work was well established. Eleven Protestant denominations with nearly thirty thousand communicants were engaged in the Evangelization of the Italians.

The churches realizing the magnitude of the problem involved in their new enterprise, decided to give keen attention to the increasing challenge, by finding a way for adequate leadership and by considering



the best type of institutional feature that would fulfill the desired end.

Three types of approach had developed in the great city centers of America: (1) The mission attached to a mother church, (2) The department of a previous organized American language congregation, (3) The regular organized church. In order to fully understand such types and aims of organizations, the North American Home Mission Congress was called in 1930, to define the general purpose of the missionary efforts of the protestant churches in America.

The following definitions was adopted:

"To win to Christian discipleship the people of North America and to Christianize the life of our nation".

Under such a definition, the work among the Italian catholics had the right to be, but because of the strong convictions that American institutions are based upon, the protestant interpretation of the Bible, the Christianization, came to be considered as synonymous to Americanization, consequently, many interested Christians came to regard the mission enterprises more as a social experiment than a religious mission.

It was natural that the first strong opposition to this missionary concept had come from the Roman ecclesiastics who at that time were not interested in the "poor Italian immigrants". The second came from the Italian Monarchy, who were glad to let the impoverished Italians emigrate to America but could not suffer to see them "denationalized".

An important factor that moved the Church and the King, was that





between the years 1908 and 1918, 1,356,535 Italian immigrants had come to America and during the same decade between 846,955 Italians had returned to their homeland.

The returning immigrants, during their residence in America, had been exposed to the American democratic way of life. They had been more or less influenced by the relentless propaganda of the protestant missionaries who constantly had presented the Biblical and theological error of the so-called mother church. Consequently, the humble peasant had acquired a sense of dignity and self-determination.

The keen eyes of the Roman prelates saw in the "repatriates" (nearly a million of them) a potential menace. The monarchy saw a dangerous threat, therefore, they devised ways and means to meet the distressing situation.

The government resurrected all the idols of historical Italy, from Columbus to the Risorgimento, established in American schools to teach Italian language. In Columbia University it promoted "La Casa Italiano" with weekly lectures, and "The Italian Book Exhibit". In the colonies, it promoted patriotic festivities through the Order of the Sons of Italy and other Clerical Benefit Societies. It also created many Chevaliers of the Crown, and used most of the Italian press in America to keep an intensive Italian propaganda.

The Church faithfully cooperated with the Crown, through the society of the "Propaganda Fide" and catholic organizations. In the course of a few years sixteen Italian parishes were established in New York City,



directed by Italian priests especially trained in Rome, to work among the Italian immigrants in America. Several parochial schools were instituted and community centers organized under the supervision of a large number of nuns and aided by the local Italian press, who was constantly misrepresenting the motive of the Italian protestant mission work.

It was unfortunate that the Mission Boards did not consider this militant destructive attitude against our missions important enough to give it immediate attention and give heed to misleading statements and findings as the following:

- (1) "Fifty years of missionary work had cost the Mission Board as much as \$100,000,000 . . . and it has failed in the purpose for which it was instituted.
- (2) The loyalty of many immigrants to the ancestral church and the predominant concern for economic independence militate against . . . interest in religious issue.
- (3) Religious movements cannot be imposed upon groups of people from without, but can develop only in response to vital needs . . . .  
when such need arises . . . ." <sup>1</sup>

Mr. Abel's fallacy in his analysis of the protestant mission work was syllogistic in its method with data collected to support a preconceived theory. Apparently, he was more concerned in dialectic defense of his wrong premises than to give honor to those who by unparalleled sacrifice

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<sup>1</sup>  
A. Abel, Protestant Mission to Catholic Immigrants, By Institute of Social and Religious Research, New York, 1933.



had acquired the crown of sainthood.

The Methodist Church in 1925, had fifty-two centers of Evangelization with fifty ministers, 5,000 adult members, 7,000 Sunday School children, 1,248 members in the Epworth League, contributing toward self-support in the years 1925, \$143,223 for ministerial support, benevolences and current expenses and repairs on Church property to the value of \$997,350.<sup>1</sup>

Let us read from the official analysis of experts on the Methodist Board:

THE JEFFERSON PARK ITALIAN METHODIST CHURCH

"Methodism's premier Italian Center, 114 Street and First Avenue: In the midst of an Italian colony of 100,000 people, in New York City, stands the Jefferson Park Methodist Church, carrying on the greatest Italian social and religious work which American Methodism knows. Consisting of a large Church building; the Wood Memorial Casa del Popolo Community House; and a fresh air home at Long Branch, New Jersey. It is a community and religious center, ministering to 15,000 people a month. Forty activities are on the weekly calendar, including Americanization Classes, Industrial Classes for Girls, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Moving Pictures, Children's Assembly and a Vesper Service Sunday afternoons attended by 800 to 1,000 weekly a day kindergarten, nursery and special preparatory membership classes."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1925 Handbook of the Bilingual Mission of the Methodist Church, Phila.

<sup>2</sup> World Service of the Methodist Church, Dr. R. Diffendorfer, Ph.D. Chicago, Ill., 1923.



THE CHURCH OF ALL NATIONS - A CHURCH OF MANY PEOPLE

"It is situated in a single city block in which dwells over 2,500 men, women and children who speak twenty different languages, it is the People's Home Church and Settlement. No other work in New York is intensive in character as this one."<sup>1</sup>

The above examples, and many more like these, confirms that the Italians are interested in a higher spiritual life.

The spirit of Methodism is that of Wesley, who said, "The world is my parish". The Americans of Italian origin are part of this world program that cannot be ignored without violating the dictates of the Christian gospel.

The Church is not a bank clerk trained to interpret balance sheets, but a religious organization that must respond to the civilized environment in which God pleased to put her. Hence, the Church cannot evaluate results in the ordinary world standard of success.

CONCLUSION

The Italians and descendants of Italians, today are no longer the humble immigrants of the 1880's and 1890's. Many of them are crowding our schools, colleges and universities. Many are achieving prominence in political and civil and religious life. They are loyal Americans and for a long time they have rejected the medieval fallacy of antiquated theology.

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1

Diffendorfer, op. cit.





The Methodist Church then has the duty to minister to them not because of romantic reasons but because Methodism is a Christian Protestant Church and cannot allow five millions of first and second generations of Italians in America to be pushed into a world of secularism.



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THEOLOGIANS, PHILOSOPHERS, PHILOLOGISTS, AND POETS

OF ITALY

WHO

" WERE CONTENT TO LAY DOWN THEIR LIVES "   
 " RATHER THAN PROVE FALSE TO THEIR CONSCIENTIOUS "   
 " CONVICTION OF THE TRUTH "

- A. Smiles -



PARTIAL LIST OF ILLUSTRIOUS MEN AND WOMEN OF THE  
PROTESTANT ITALIAN REFORMATION DURING THE  
FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH CENTURY

Alciaty, Paolo of Motta	Translated Swiss Bible	Exiled
Algeri, Pomponio of Nola	Theologian	Burned
Altieri, Baldassare	Ambassador to England	Exiled
Albizio, Antonio	Academician	"
Agostine of Venice	Minister	"
Arnaldo da Brescia	Theologian	Burned
Baltista, da Cremona	"	Exiled
Buonarici, Angelo	"	"
Benedetti, Locarno	"	Burned
Bonifacio, Bernardino	Academician	Exiled
Betti, Francesco	"	"
Battista, da Mantova	Preacher	"
Bruto, Jacobo Asti	Augustinian Monk	Burned
Bruno, Giordano	Philosopher	"
Blaudrata, Giorgio of Salluzio	Translated Polish Bible	Exiled
Beccaria, Giovanni	Preacher	"
Bracchioli, Michele	Academician	"
Benedetto, da Mantova	Author and Theologian	"
Buzio, Giovanni	Franciscan Theologian	Burned
Brucioli, Alesandro	Author and Publisher	Died in Prison
Beretari, Poliziano	Priest and Polyglot	Exiled
Braccioli, Poggio	Academician	"



Balbani	Author	Exiled
Bernardio, de Gargano	Nobleman and Author	"
Baroccio, Bartolomeo	Learned Nobleman	Burned
Burlamacchi, Francesco	Patriot and Author	Beheaded
Colonna, Princess Victoria	Poetess and Reformer	- -
Casabianca, Domenico	Reformer	Burned
Cibo, Caterina (niece of Pope Innocent VIII)	Reformer	Burned
Castellina della Antonio	"	Accused of Heresy
Cervini, Marcello	Translated New Testament into Ethiopian	Exiled
Ciriaco, of Ancona	Phylogologist	"
Castelveto, Lucovico	Literary Critic	"
Colonna, Duke Marcantonio	Reformer	"
Cherubina, Madonna	"	"
Cellario, Francesco	Franciscan Theologian	Burned
Colli, de Paolo	Doctor in Law	Exiled
Colonna, Countess Giulia	Reformer	- -
Clario, Isodoro	Translated Bible and Reformer	- -
Curione, Secondo Celio	Rector of University	Exiled
Calcagui, Celio	Reformer	"
Carmasecchi, Pietro	Academician	Beheaded
Camillo, da Chiavenna	Theologian	Exiled
Castelvetro, Ludovico of Modena	Literary Critic	"
Corrado, Alfonso of Mantua	Preacher	"



Caraccioli, Marquis Galeazzo	Reformer	Exiled
Celso, Mino of Sienna	"	"
Cornello, Augustinian Monk	Theologian	Inprisoned
Catarina, Rosalina	Reformer	- -
Calvi, Francesco	Physician - Reformer	Exiled
Colandrino, Scipione of Lucca	Preacher	Stabbed
Cellario, Francesco of Morbegno	"	Inprisoned
Claudio, Bishop of Turin	Theologian	- -
Castiglione, Varnerio	Preacher	- -
Camillo, Siculue	Writer	- -
Cusano of Vercelli	Philosopher	- -
Conte Bernardino	Reformer	Burned
D'Aloisi, Francesco of Caserta	Reformer	Beheaded
Della, Rovere, Princes Lavinia	Writer	- -
Della Porta, Augustinian Monk	Reformer	Exiled
Della Rovere, Giulio, Monk	Reformer	"
Di Monte, Barbara	"	"
Diodati, Giovanni	Translated Italian Bible and Reformer	"
Di Orello, Lucia	Reformer	"
Dolcino, Friar Apostolic Order	Reformer	Burned
De Montefeltro, Anna	Writer and Reformer	- -
Domenichi, Ludovico	Publisher	Inprisoned
Egidio of Viterbo	Augustinian Monk and Reformer	- -
Farminio, Marcantonio	Writer and Physician	persecuted
Famio, da Faenza	Reformer	Strangled
Fontana, Baldassare	"	Exiled





Fonzio, Bartolomeo	Monk and Reformer	Drowned
Ficino	Literary Critic	- -
Fileno, Lisia of Sicily	Preacher	- -
Faventino of Faenza	Reformer	Executed
Folegno, Gianbattista	Monk and Reformer	- -
Francesco, Calabro	Preacher	Exiled
Ferlino, Jeromino of Sicily	"	"
Flaccio, Matteo	Reformer	"
Favrizio of Gubbio	Writer and Soldier	"
Fregoso, Federico	Distinguished Priest	- -
Guarino, Francesco	Reformer	Imprisoned
Galateo, Gerolamo	"	Burned
Galeazzo, of Lodi	"	"
Giulio da Milano	Priest and Theologian	Exiled
Gaffori, Cesare of Piacenza	Preacher	Exiled
Gamba, Francesco	Reformer	Burned
Grattoroli, Guglielmo	Physician and Reformer	- -
Gaddi, Paolo	Preacher	- -
Gonzago, Duchess Julia	Writer	Exiled
Grillinzoni, Giovanni	Physician	- -
Girardo, Lilio	Teacher	- -
Gribadi, Mattero University of Padova and Tubinga		Exiled
Guida, Archbishop of Milano	Theologian	- -
Gualtieri, Pietro	Translator of New Testament in Ethiopian	- -



Girlanda, Giulio of Venice	Reformer	Drowned
Guglielmo, Duke of Mantua	"	Excommunicated
Guicciardini, Francesco	Historyographer	"
Gadaldino, Giovanni	Printer	Life Imprisonment
Grimani, Giovanni	Theologian	- -
Galateo, Geronimo	"	Life Imprisonment
Galeazzo, Trezio	University of Pavia	Burned
Jacopo da Voragine	Bishop	- -
Lupetino, Baldo	Franciscan and Theologian	Drowned
Locamo, Benedetto	Preacher	- -
Landolfo, Rodolfino	"	- -
Lentulo, Scipione	"	- -
Lariscio, Paolo of Verona	Philologist	Exiled
Lacisio, Paolo	Professor of Eastern Languages	"
Maollio, Giovanni	Monk - University Professor	- -
Minutoli, of Lucca	Preacher	Exiled
Mainardi, Agostino	Theologian	"
Maturo, Bartolomeo	Eloquent Preacher	"
Martine, Pietro Vermigli	University of Oxford	"
Massario, Robert	Professor of Medicine	"
Manzetti, Pier Angelo	Doctor	His bones removed from grave and burned
Manetti, Giamozzo	Hebrew Scholar	- -



Margherita, Duchess of Savoy	Reformer	Persecuted
Martengo, Count of Barco	Reformer	Exiled
Marmocchini, Sante	Translator of Bible in Italian	"
Malerni, Nicola	Monk, Translated part of Bible in Italian	"
Massimo, Teofilo	Translated New Testament in Italian	"
Morata, Olimpia	Poetess	"
Monti, Pompeo	Critic and Reformer	Strangled
Marzone	Preacher	Beaten with Iron Rod to death
Negri, Francesco	Monk and Doctor in Languages	Exiled
Nardi, of Florence	Academician	"
Negri, Jeromino	Augustinian Preacher	Life Imprisonment
Ochino, Bendetto	Capuchin Monk and great Preacher	Exiled
Orisini, Orsine	Academician	- -
Paganini, Sante	Translated Bible	Exiled
Pico, Prince of Mirandola	Polyglot	- -
Poligenio, Marzello	Academician	- -
Porta, Egigio	Augustinian Monk, Follower of Zwingli	Exiled
Pascali, Giovan Luigi	Editor of the French New testament	"
Palerario, Aonio	Academician	Strangled
Pompomio, Algieri	Literary Critic (at age of 24)	Burned
Pontrmolo of Modena	Preacher	"



Parisotti, Pietro	Eloquent Reformed Pastor	Exiled
Petrarca	Poet of the Renaissance	Excommunicated
Pisano of Lucca	Literary Critic	- -
Pauchiarini, Bartolomeo	Ambassador to France	Burned
Renata, daughter of Louis XII of France, Duchess of Ferrara	Reformer	Exiled
Rustici, Filippo	Translator of Bible in Italian	"
Roselli, Lucio Paolo	Friend of Melauchthon	"
Riccio, Paolo of Sicily	Doctor of Theology	"
Ricoldo, of Florence	Doctor of Eastern languages	"
Relencini, Andrea	Mathematician	Strangled and Burned
Riccio, Bartolomeo	Academician	- -
Rincho, Ludovico	Reformer	- -
Riveroni	Translator of New Testament and Psalms	Exiled
Ricetto, Antonio of Vicenza	Reformer	Strangled
Rangone, Elena	Distinguished Critic	- -
Santacari, Francesco	Hebrew Scholar	Exiled
Soucinati	Publisher	"
Spinola, Francesco	Priest - Reformer	Drowned
Spiera, Francesco	Doctor of Law	Exiled
Sarpi, Paolo	Historian and Theologian	Assassinated
Savonarola, Girolamo	Dominican Preacher	Strangulated and Burned
Speziali, Pietro	Doctor of Philosophy	Imprisoned for life
Sartoris, Nicolo	Reformer	Burned





Soranzo, Vittore	Bishop - Reformer	- -
Soccini, Cornelio	Theologian	Exiled
Staphylo, Bishop of Sibari	Denouncer of Church Corruption	- -
Sega, Francesco of Rovigo	Writer	Drowned
Tizzano of Treviso	Scientist - Reformer	- -
Tremelio, Emmanuele	Doctor of Oriental Languages	Exiled
Tisserano da Padova	Reformer	Burned
Trezio, Galeazzo of Lodi	Reformer	"
Turretini of Lucca	Reformer	Exiled
Turriano, Jeromino	Reformed Pastor	"
Virginio, Francesco of Brescia	Bible Critic	Exiled
Vergirio, Giovan Battista	Bishop of Pola - Reformer	- -
Vergerio Pier Paolo	Doctor of Law	Exiled
Vico Soprano	Reformer	"
Varaglia, Gioffredo	Fransiscan Reformer	"
Valentino	Bookseller	Excommuni- cated
Valla, Lorenzo	Academician	Condemned to death
Valdo, Pietro	Founder of the Waldensian Church	Exiled
Valentino, Fillippo	Polyglot - Reformer	"
Valdes, Giovanni.	Eloquent Preacher	"
Zaccario	Monk - Translator of the Bible	- -
Zanchi, Girolamo	Augustinian- Reformer Preacher	Exiled

Note: Those marked as exiled wer fugitives and impenitent reformers. On November 26, 1560, the Cardinals of the Congregation called upon each person who might have it in his power to arrest any fugitive and impenitent heretic, who had incurred all the pain, spiritual and temporal, decreed against such criminals and send them to Rome. Those not arrested were burned in effigy.







## Personal Qualifications

Amedeo Maria Diego Riggio born in Carini, Sicily (Italy).

Member of the Methodist Church, Palermo, Italy.

Naturalized American Citizen November 8, 1912.

Ordained Minister of the Methodist Church in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Preliminary studies Filippo Parlatore Istituto, Palermo, Italy.

1907 - 1908 Attended Union Theological Seminary, New York City, as special student.

1945 Received the degree of Bachelor of Science in Education, University of Tampa, Florida.

1947 Pursued special courses in Guidance, University of Florida.

1948 Received the degree of Master of Arts, Florida Southern College, Lakeland, Florida.

### Pastoral charges served:

1904 - 1906 Italian Methodist Church, New Orleans, Louisiana.

1906 - 1908 Organized and dedicated the First Italian Methodist Church in Astoria, Long Island.

1909 - 1913 Organized the Italian Methodist Missions of Corona and Jamaica, Long Island.

1913 - 1930 Served as pastor of the Jefferson Park Italian Methodist Church, New York City.

1920 Organized the Social Center, East Harlem, known as Casa del Popolo, and a Fresh Air Home for underprivileged children of Eastside, New York, at Long Branch, New Jersey.

1932 - 1937 Pastor of the Christ Italian Methodist Church, Newark, New Jersey.

1941 Retired.



Personal Qualifications

(Con't)

1941 Entered the Hillsborough County School System as teacher of Social Studies.

1914 to 1930 Member of the Local Charity Organization of East Harlem, New York City.

1914 - 1924 Scout Master, Jefferson Park Boy Scouts of America, New York.

1918 - 1920 Lieutenant Chaplain of the New York Police Reserve.

1915 - 1930 President and chairman of various civic, labor and professional organizations in New York City.

Member of Tampa Torch Club.

1945 - 1946 Member of University of Tampa faculty, Florida.

October 1948 - Member of Florida Southern College Faculty, Lakeland, Florida.















